



## Economist Mao Yushi on why the Chinese government is not evil

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Chinese economist Mao Yushi is in Washington DC to receive the \$250,000 [Cato Institute's Milton Friedman Liberty Prize](#) for his advocacy for "an open and transparent political system." Mao, the 83-year-old founder of the [Chinese think tank Unirule](#), infuriated leftists last year in [China for calling for Mao Zedong](#) (no relation) to be held accountable for his crimes. The case of Chen Guangcheng, a blind human rights activist who sought safety in the U.S. Embassy late last month has spotlighted China's current human rights weaknesses, but Mao, who like many Chinese suffered greatly during the Cultural Revolution, thinks that's missing the point. I interviewed Mao this

morning about American imperialism, Bo Xilai, and Chairman Mao's long shadow (Edited and condensed for clarity):

**On China's progress:** America thinks the Chinese government oppresses human rights. Yes China has its problems, but in the past thirty years human rights in China has seen a big improvement. The American people and the American government think that Chinese government is evil, but that's wrong: It's not like in Mao Zedong's time, when they killed millions of people for political reasons. In the past thirty years, China has never executed someone for political reasons. (Even the execution of the former head of the [Chinese State Food and Drug Administration](#)) was for criminal reasons. Compare China to other countries like Syria, Libya: they've killed political prisoners. China has not.

**On Former Chongqing Party secretary Bo Xilai:** His (downfall) had a big connection to politics. He wanted China to return to Mao Zedong's time, and this I don't approve of. But many Chinese did. Many thought Mao was a big savior; like he was a God. It's possible that other (high leaders) have this view. They can't insult Mao. They put his big picture on Tiananmen Square. When I was in my twenties, I also believed in him. I thought he was great. But fifty million people died because of his rule. Many youthful people, they didn't have that experience, and still believe in Mao, like sixty years ago. Mao Zedong thought tricked me, and it's now tricking many young people.

**On American Imperialism:** Many in China and in the government thinks America is China's biggest enemy; that the "American imperialists want to destroy China." That's not happening. Also, the "American imperialists," they occupied Japan and Germany after World War 2, and now they're two of the world's biggest economies. I'm here to receive this prize, and many Chinese have said, you're taking America's money, you're a traitor. The Chinese government has taken so much money from the Ford Foundation, and I have just taken just a little bit of money.

**On Chen Guangcheng:** Both sides are using this to attack the other. China has used this to say you interfere in my internal politics, and need to apologize. America has used this to attack China on human rights, saying you don't protect your people, you are evil. Many Chinese government officials say America wants to destroy us, but so many Chinese come to America to study abroad. When they have troubles, they flee to

American embassies. Wang Lijun (a **former deputy of Bo**), for example. Many Chinese people think America can protect them.

**On political reform:** (Because of the Bo Xilai scandal) The Communist Party has opened the curtain a little, and let people see what's inside. Things are changing, and have changed. In Mao's time, politics was a matter of life and death. Transfer of power now is a peaceful process. From Deng Xiaoping, to Jiang Zemin to Hu Jintao, there haven't been deaths. You look at (countries like Pakistan) and there were deaths. Most of my opinions I can express freely. Of course, not 100 percent of them, but most of them, as long as I'm fair. Compared with other developing countries' governments, China's government has done a very good job.